



Kristen Lane – Appalachia CARES

I first heard of AmeriCorps when I was in a service-learning class at Tusculum College. I helped volunteer at a soup kitchen at a local church, and was introduced to an AmeriCorps member serving at the College. I did not know much about the program at that time but quickly learned that it aligned with my values and desire to feel connected with my community. After I graduated a few years later with a degree as a Field Guide/Naturalist, I started looking for opportunities within my field and found out how amazing it is to be part of AmeriCorps during my placement at the Middle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance (MNWA) over the past two years.

Before I became a part of AmeriCorps, I had always had an interest in both protecting the environment and inspiring others. When I was at Tusculum College, I became President of the Pioneer Green Team, a club that was over recycling and conservation events. We hosted a public Earth Day event each year, which gave me experience in networking with various community members. AmeriCorps has given me a practical way to continue developing relationships within my local community and fostering growth within it. I have met so many inspirational individuals during my time here and feel a stronger sense of civic engagement and duty now that I have truly immersed myself within the Greeneville community.

This year has been exciting and productive so far. I was able to do trail maintenance for the first time on the Appalachian Trail, which can be quite challenging! It was an enjoyable experience, and I really felt like I was “getting things done.” I have also been serving to bring the Paul E. Hayden Educational Wetland on the Tusculum College campus to its full potential. I have directed a wetland education program for MNWA over the past two years, educating over 300 college students and recruiting 150 student volunteers to help with maintenance efforts at the wetland. MNWA has also been able to provide hands-on, curriculum-based learning opportunities to over 600 elementary students by utilizing the wetland. It has been an exciting journey, and I am so proud of what we have accomplished for the students and community members in Greene County.

Some additional activities I am involved in at my host site include: project grant writing, public relations, outreach and community presentations, environmental education, on the ground project assistance, volunteer management, and organizational support. Through AmeriCorps, I have strengthened my public speaking skills, mastered flexibility and time management, and reinforced my values and beliefs through service.

When my term finishes in September of this year, I will be seeking full-time employment in the natural sciences. I would like to work in an area like a State or National Park, or other opportunity involving environmental education and serving others. I am also interested in attending graduate school for Environmental Science within a year, but have not committed to a specific program at this time.